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Perfecting Independent Reading in the Classroom

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Perfecting Independent Reading in the Classroom

by

Amy McLeod

A Starred Paper

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science in

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to research the connections between students and independent reading, also known as silent sustained reading (SSR), leisure reading, and many other names, within my own classroom. This topic interests me for three main reasons: personal growth as an educator, the connections between independent reading and student achievement, and the possibility of independent reading being replaced or removed from secondary English classrooms.

Personal Growth and My Own Teaching Philosophy

Independent reading has always been a confrontational topic with me and my colleagues. There seems to be two different opinions: one is in support of independent reading because of the benefits connected to it, and the other group agrees reading independently is important but do not view it as a necessity in a secondary education classroom. The more time I spend discussing the issue with my coworkers, and pondering it myself, the more prominent the idea of time comes to be a factor. Both groups know the benefits of independent reading, and there are many studies to support the benefits which are discussed more later in the paper; however, both groups are worried about not having enough time to meet the required Minnesota State Standards and school bought curriculum. Because of this realization, I want to know what strategies work best to encourage independent reading with my students in order to optimally utilize what little time I have with them in my classroom.

Secondly, the research identified when examining independent reading often used populations that are contradictory to the population I would like to use for my study. The studies

often included populations from an urban school where the majority of participants were non-minority and not meeting state standards while my research sample from my current school district is majority white, many scoring proficient or higher on state standards, and from a rural area (Daniels, & Steres, 2011; Francois, 2013; Samuels, Hiebert, Petscher, & Feller, 2011; Williams, 2014). The lack of research using a student population similar to my own, encourages me to investigate independent reading more within my classroom to better fit the population of students I teach daily.

How Independent Reading Supports Student Engagement, Oral Reading Fluency, and Student Achievement

There is a lot of support for a connection between independent reading, oral reading fluency, engagement, and overall student comprehension (Cullinan, 2000; Francois, 2013; National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, Samuels, Hiebert, Petscher, & Feller, 2011). I also noticed the varied support between independent reading and comprehension within my own classroom. Students who come into sixth grade with a high oral reading fluency (ORF) score and are proficient or above standards as deemed by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) are often those who engage in reading both in and out of the classroom. However, my reluctant readers and those who seem to be reading material below their grade level, are students who score low on their oral reading fluency and partially meet or do not meet state standards. With the evidence of a positive correlation between independent reading and student achievement, it is only natural that I, as an educator, would want to spend time performing action research to find the best way to implement independent reading within my classroom and curriculum.

Replacing, or Removing Independent Reading: The Dilemma of Time

Lastly, with the increasing emphasis on student scores on state tests, independent reading is often one of the first activities to be removed from the secondary English classroom, especially when teachers only have an hour with their students. In my own school, independent reading is an everyday occurrence for sixth grade because teachers have a 2-hour block; however, in seventh and eighth grade, independent reading takes a back seat and is often used as an activity for students to do when they are done with their curriculum assigned work. One of the reasons this occurs is the amount of time it takes away from teacher-led, curriculum-based learning. However, removing independent reading in the classroom is a disservice to students especially with studies showing students become more disinterested in reading as they progress through the grade levels and cultivating students into young readers is essential in helping them succeed in other subject areas (Chua, 2008; Ivy & Broaddus, 2001; Kelley & Decker, 2009). Independent reading is an engagement strategy. Widdowson, Dixon, and Moore (1996) stated, “SSR provides developing readers with the opportunity to practice the whole reading process without the risk of public failure” (p. 171). In addition, there are studies that support an independent reading program coupled with English instruction shows more positive outcomes than just English instruction alone (Reis, Eckert, McCouch, Jacobs, & Coyne, 2008).

In conclusion, by providing the current study where different strategies are used and student reactions are recorded, I will be able to identify the best practices to integrate independent reading in my classroom. Classroom time will be utilized more efficiently with students being able to participate in independent reading practices that interests and supports

their reading, and less time will be spent participating in activities that do not influence their perspectives at all. These activities essentially waste valuable class time.

Research Questions

1. What activities work best to expose my students to a variety of books and fosters their interests in independent reading
2. What methods can I implement in my classroom to encourage students' interest and involvement in independent reading?
3. Can I change student perspectives of themselves as a reader and independent reading through activities that vary in both exposure to literature and involvement?

Focus of Paper

The focus of this paper was to investigate studies which already explored independent reading and describe action research which has been completed within my own classroom. Before I was able to gather data and look closely at my own classroom practices, I had to investigate studies that already dived into the topic of independent reading. In Chapter 2 of this paper, I synthesize the information I gathered through a variety of sources. Then in Chapter 3, I discuss the implication of action research to investigate a month-long reading plan which explores three different methods that expose students to reading (library visits, book tastings, and a suggestion envelope) and three methods that encourage student involvement (independent reading time, book competition, and celebration). These methods and how they were implemented in the classroom are discussed more in depth, along with the data I collected, findings from this data, limitations, and finally, future implications.

Importance of the Topic

The importance of independent reading has already been hinted at earlier in Chapter 1 of this paper and is more thoroughly addressed in Chapter 2; however, I will synthesize the information. First there are many benefits connected with independent reading. Independent reading benefits include, but are not limited to, student engagement, differentiation opportunities, and fostering interaction between student-teacher, student-student, and student-literature. Secondly, there is a strong correlation between independent reading, reading fluency, student engagement, and student achievement. These two topics of importance are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2 of this paper. Lastly, with independent reading increasingly becoming an activity placed on the backburning of many English teachers' curriculum, it would be extremely beneficial to find a quick, concise, method to use in the classroom that identifies students' interests in relation to independent reading. My action research addressing my strategy of a quick month-long reading plan is discussed in Chapter 3 of this paper.

Definitions of Terms

Differentiation: a term used in the educational field referring to the various methods targeting different learning styles an educator teaches concepts within his/her classroom.

Genres: the different categories of novels. Genres include horror, suspense, action, etc.

Independent reading: reading that takes place inside or outside of the classroom where students engage in reading without the assistance of the teacher or a classmate.

MCA: stands for the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment. A Minnesota state test designed to evaluate students' achievement and yearly growth in relation to the Minnesota state standards.

Secondary English classroom: a classroom where language arts, the ability to read and comprehend literature, is taught to students in sixth through twelfth grade.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter 1 discussed the overall layout and concepts of my paper along with my reasoning on why I wanted to investigate independent reading to begin with. Chapter 2 synthesizes and discusses a multitude of sources which have already researched independent reading. I have identified two main topics of discussion: independent reading's benefits and independent reading's importance.

Independent Reading's Benefits

Independent reading goes by many names such as silent sustained reading (SSR), leisure reading, and reading for pleasure. A common definition of independent reading is the act of reading students choose to do on their own. It is not assigned and often includes student choice in reading material, exposure to a variety of sources, and reflection on what they read (Cullinan, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000). A common misconception is independent reading hinders teachers' ability to cover the curriculum. However, students having choice in reading material and participating in sustained reading does not mean teachers cannot cover the state standards. In contrast, by providing students with their own choice in material, teachers engage students by appealing to their own interests which also encourages students to apply skills that they have learned in class (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2011; Stairs & Stairs-Burgos, 2010). Independent reading should be a tool that allows teachers to further engage their students, provide differentiation, and encourage interaction with a text.

Tool of Engagement

Literature related to sociocultural theory supports a link between independent reading and student engagement (Daniels & Steres, 2011; Francois, 2013; Widdowson et al., 1996; Williams,

2014). This theory stresses the importance of adults modeling and providing support for independent reading to the younger generations of the community. Through modeling the process of independent reading, social learning naturally happens for students creating a culture around the aspect of reading. By creating, demonstrating, and supporting this culture of reading, student engagement naturally increases when they see teachers, administrators, and other adults draw attention to the fact they are reading and actively engaging in conversations about books.

A study performed by Widdowson et al. (1996) evaluated the effect of teacher modeling on low-, average-, and high-achieving primary school children. The study aimed to connect teacher modeling to students' on-task reading behavior. The results showed the greatest increase in on-task behavior in the average-achieving readers. Low-achieving readers also increased but did not make as large of a gain. Interestingly, the study showed that high-achieving remained the same, and in some cases, average achieving students in the experimental groups surpassed the mean of high-achieving students in the control groups. This study proves teacher modeling influences students' on-task behavior, and by having students engaged in independent reading, a teacher can provide more time dedicated to instruction that is presented in appealing ways to students.

A similar study performed by Methe and Hintze (2003) also tested the theory of teacher modeling during independent reading and the impact it had on student behavior. The main difference is that they collected a baseline, had a teacher model, took the modeling away, and then added the modeling in again over a period of time. They identified a control and an experimental group and found an average increase in student on-task behavior from 51% to 73% while modeling the desired reading behavior. During a reversal phase, where no modeling was

performed, students regressed back to their baseline measurements. Their study provided proof there is a positive correlation between teaching modeling and student engagement.

Additionally, this trend is supported by qualitative studies performed by Francois (2013) in which the principal created an office library of over 2,000 books, and Cullinan (2000) who also pointed out the importance of parent involvement. Overall there is support for independent reading as a tool for engagement. Again, if students are engaged in the lesson, then the teacher has a better chance in teaching desired content material.

Tool of Differentiation

By having students participate in independent reading, teachers can better fit their instruction to each individual student known as differentiation. Studies that researched a Schoolwide Enrichment Reading Model (SEM-R), a program coupling independent reading with teacher-student conferences to address individual student needs, found that students were not negatively affected when their curriculum-based program was replaced with this SEM-R program that places emphasis on independent reading and the use of differentiated instruction through one-on-one conferences (Little; McCoach, & Reis, 2014; Reis et al., 2008). These findings were especially true if students' interests and motivation were encouraged through student book choice (Little et al., 2014). In addition, another study of the same SEM-R program found that the treatment group made larger gains in ORF than the control group (Reis et al., 2008). Most importantly, many studies emphasize the validity of having students reading texts at or above their reading level. Having students reading at their level or higher helps students practice the desirable higher-level thinking skills (National Reading Panel, 2000; Reis et al., 2008; Rasinski et al., 2011). Independent reading allows teachers to work with students to

help them in areas that they are struggling by providing a text that means more to the student than the curriculum textbook, allocating time to discuss individual reading skills, and fostering positive student attitudes toward reading. Independent reading serves as a tool that teachers can use to fit each student's individual needs.

Tool of Interaction

It is a widely accepted concept that independent reading alone will not make the greatest gains in student achievement, and independent reading, coupled with additional instruction, is the best method to encourage student achievement. Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2011) identified eight different types of readers ranging from "fake readers," readers that often pretend to be reading or doing activity to avoid it, all the way to "bookworms." The article provides additional instruction strategies through differentiation for teachers to interact with each type of reader they may find in their classroom. Often the strategy presented encourages the teacher to interact with the student or provides an activity to encourage student interaction with their choice book.

Rasinski et al. (2011) researched the implementation of Reading Plus, a computer-based intervention program that develops silent reading fluency and overall comprehension. Researchers found a greater improvement in the experimental group than the control group across all grade levels and subpopulations except students who fell into the category of English Language Learners. This successful program had students read a passage and then answer comprehension questions. Essentially it encouraged students to read a selection and then encourage reflection and interaction through questions.

In conclusion, having students simply participate in independent reading is not enough. Independent reading, coupled with additional instruction encouraging interaction with the text, is the best method to help students achieve success.

Independent Reading's Importance

It is recommended as appropriate and valuable to encourage students to read more and participate in reading orally which fosters improvement in fluency and overall reading achievement (National Reading Panel, 2000). The more students read, the greater chance they increase their fluency, which helps them increase their reading comprehension, and reading comprehension leads to greater student achievement. However, this chain reaction can never begin if a teacher does not encourage student engagement during independent reading.

Student Engagement and Independent Reading

As already stated, independent reading has little influence if students are not properly engaged. The ideas presented by sociocultural theory, teacher modeling, and a culture of reading, were already discussed. From the research gathered, students start viewing independent reading favorably the more a teacher encourages it and creates positive experiences surrounding it. Daniels and Steres (2011), Francois (2013), Little et al. (2014), and Williams (2014) collected evidence in support of the importance of student engagement with independent reading. Three common ideas presented in the research are independent reading needs to be a widespread goal, teachers need to have knowledge of young adult literature, and there needs to be commitment to the program.

Reading needs to be a widespread goal of the school, and sometimes the community, to foster positive benefits such as peer modeling and book clubs. Students need to see adults and

older students committed to reading to encourage their own dedication to the concept. Second, teacher recommendations play a huge role in engagement because it shows the student that the teacher cares about their reading. For this reason, teachers need to have knowledge of young adult literature. Lastly, there needs to be a commitment to the independent reading program. This includes having excessive libraries for students to choose from and providing time for students to read. Schools utilizing these three guidelines can impact student engagement and positive interactions with reading.

Independent Reading and Reading Fluency

The National Reading Panel (2000) defined fluent readers as those who “can read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression” (p. 189). Reading exposes students to a variety of texts with new words and provides students with practice which fosters fluency. Rasinski et al.’s (2011) research, described previously, found “positive effects for fluency instruction on students’ word recognition, reading fluency, comprehension, and overall reading achievement” (p. 78). Independent reading and students’ reading fluency work together to increase overall reading comprehension.

Reading Comprehension and Student Achievement

There is a definite connection between improving reading comprehension, fostered by independent reading and fluency, to student achievement (Cullinan, 2000; Reis et al., 2008). The National Reading Panel (2000) cited many studies where researchers connected independent reading and fluency to student achievement. However, some of these studies were more successful than others. Rasinski, Padak, McKeon, Krug-Wilfong, Friedauer, and Heim (2005)

investigated high school students' reading fluency and comprehension while silently reading. The study found that many students' reading fluency and comprehension scores were below expected norms, and it went on to say that reading fluency is a predictor of student achievement in both primary and secondary levels of education. Rasinski et al. (2011) emphasized reading achievement can be improved by silent reading fluency and comprehension programs in both primary and secondary grades. This supports the claim that ORF along with independent reading can improve a student's reading comprehension. With a higher reading comprehension, a student can understand more complex writing which increases student achievement.

In addition, studies seemed to show that fluency and reading comprehension programs, and the time students spent participating in the programs, affects students differently (Daniels & Steres, 2011; National Reading Panel, 2000). A study performed by Samuels and Wu (2004) divided students into two groups: one to receive 15 minutes of SSR per day and then regular instruction and the experimental group who spent 40 minutes of SSR per day. From this divide, they looked at low-achieving readers, average readers, and high-achieving readers. The high-achieving readers in the experimental group made greater gains on vocabulary, but the high-achieving students in the control group did better at word recognition. Low-achieving students seemed to benefit most from the 15 minutes SSR because the researchers speculated that the 40 minutes SSR was too long for their attention spans, and they struggled with understanding the text. To conclude the researchers stated, "time spent reading independently interact with students reading ability and had a positive impact on certain components of reaching achievement" (p. 20). Further providing evidence the connection between reading ability and student achievement.

Likewise, Williams (2014) collected data regarding two urban schools, Roosevelt Middle School and Florin High School, implementation of an SSR reading program. Many of the schools' student population failed to meet state standards. Results showed gains in both schools. In the middle school, the average amount of students at or above reading level doubled/tripled from 10% to 23-30%. At the high school, the gap between African Americans and non-minority students narrowed by 11%, and the gap between the school's Hispanic and non-minority students narrowed by 14%. The results showed although independent reading seems to affect students differently based on their reading levels, studies agree that it is a valid tool to improve students' reading achievement.

Chapter 3: Methods, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 2 discussed a multitude of articles researching the benefits and importance of independent reading in the classroom. The information obtained, analyzed, and compiled was used to create a plan of action research used within my own classroom. This plan is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 which has been broken into four categories: methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Methods

Types of Exposure. The types of exposure used in this study are activities students have been participating in throughout the school year; however, they have been inconsistent. By keeping these three exposures consistent, a teacher can identify which ones his/her students prefer and continue to utilize the students' preference. The following activities were chosen because they encourage exposure to a variety of books, provide opportunities for teacher and student demonstrations on the books they are reading, and overall encourages a culture of reading within the classroom. These three components are all identified as important by research previously mentioned in Chapter 2. The first and third week of the month is reserved for the library, the second week includes the book tasting activity, and the fourth week includes the suggestion envelope activity.

Library Visits. During the study, students will go to the library as a class once every 2 weeks. They spend at least 20 minutes of their class period there. While in the media center, students are requested to look for books, check a book out if they need to, and if they still have time, independently read. By bringing students to the library consistently, a teacher encourages the student to continuously read and find new books. This also prevents students from having

nothing to read during independent reading time in the classroom. In addition, students can consult the media specialist to help find books of interests.

Book Tasting. A book tasting is an activity that allows students to be exposed to different genres and are utilized once at the beginning of the month. The activity is described as follows: students are broken into groups of five and sat down at a table. In front of each student is a stack of young adult novels. Students are then instructed to pick up one of the four books at random and pursue the cover. After they are given adequate time to look the book over, the instructor asks students to read the abstract of the novel. Once students seem to be done with reading the quick abstract, they are given 2 minutes to read the first part of the novel. Another minute is provided for students to write down their thoughts about the novel they just “tasted.” This process is repeated multiple times while having students rotate to different book piles. After the activity is completed, students can check-out books that are interesting to them. Book tastings expose students to a variety of genres while encouraging them to self-reflect on their personal preferences.

Suggestion Envelope. The suggestion envelope allows students to suggest books they find interesting to their classmate. The envelope is found in the classroom and students are instructed to write a book title they would like to suggest to their classmates. Once, toward the end of the month, the teacher will create a power point, or some other demonstration, sharing a quick summary of the book along with an image of the front cover. The teacher can also include book trailers found on YouTube to help interests his/her students more. Having students suggest favorable books to each other encourages a culture of reading within the classroom, and it also provides students a glimpse into what his/her classmates are reading.

Types of Involvement

The following activities are being utilized because they encourage independent reading and are designed to foster students' involvement in independent reading. Independent reading time and the book competitions will take place throughout the month which will end with the celebration.

Independent Reading Time. Many of the studies already mentioned discussed the importance of providing time for students to read. This study is no different. Students receive 15 minutes of independent reading time every day, excluding days where a previously described exposure activity takes place. Fifteen minutes is chosen because studies have shown that students received varied benefits from independent reading depending on their reading level (Reis et al., 2008; Samuels & Wu, 2004). Since the population being examined for the study is comprised of a variety of reading ranges, 15 minutes allow students to receive a controlled amount of time to just concentrate on reading while not providing too much time for students to become distracted or lose interests. In addition, with the support of teacher behavior already described previously and how a teacher's behavior can negatively or positively affect student engagement during independent reading, it is important for the teacher to be modeling desired reading behavior during this provided fifteen minutes.

Book Competition. It is general knowledge that students are competitive, so it makes sense to include an involvement activity geared toward competition. During this study, two different competitions are taking place: an individual competition and a class competition. At the beginning of the study, students are given a solo competition where they are encouraged to read at least one book during the month. If a student can finish his/her reading book, they will

receive an extra reward during the celebration activity which will be described in the following section.

The second competition is a class competition. Since the class is composed of fast and slow readers, a class competition is essential. A class competition allows all the students feel like they have accomplished a goal at the end of the month. It also prevents any negative feelings toward reading or penalties for not finishing a book if a student is a slower reader, chooses a longer book, or if another factor occurs. Lastly, having a class competition allows everyone to participate in the celebration describe in the next section.

The data recorded for both competitions are tracked in the same way. This allows the teacher to have students keep record and saves him/her from performing extra work. As students finish reading an independent novel, they notify their teacher and have a short discussion about what they thought about the book. The student is then allowed to write their book title and author on a poster sheet in front of the room (individual tracker) and then add a point to a class count in the back of the room (class tracker).

Celebration. The month ends with a celebration. Students are motivated to read by a variety of factors, both intrinsic and external. By providing students with an external reward, I hope to encourage hesitant readers to participate throughout the month of reading. The celebration consists of providing students with hot cocoa and having a relaxing hour of just reading. Students who finished their individual competition receive marshmallows with their cocoa; however, all students will receive the hot cocoa treat. The celebration at the end of the month is to acknowledge students' participation throughout the month. It also contributes to the culture of reading in the classroom. If I, as their teacher, demonstrate that independent reading is

important enough to take time to relax and just read, I can influence their own perspectives of reading and its importance.

Methods of Gathering Evidence

Participants. The participants of this study consist of two sixth-grade English classes which equals 56 students. Of these 56 students, 23 are girls and 33 are boys. The classes are comprised of students from a range of economic status; however, most of the population are white and are all from a rural community.

Survey

A before-and-after survey is utilized to gather data regarding student interests and involvement in independent reading. The following are surveys found throughout my research which I modified and perfected to fit my student population and the data I want to obtain. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) conducted a study that explored 1,765 sixth-grade students' motivation for reading. They used a survey comprised of open-ended responses, short answers, and checklist items to obtain more diverse responses. I followed their study and was sure to include all three types of questions within my own survey. In addition, Kelley and Decker (2009) used a survey to identify motivation for middle school students to read. They used the idea of having students finish a sentence to show their perspective. From these two studies, other studies I found, and my own knowledge, I was able to create a before survey and an after survey that targeted the key data I wanted to collect. The before survey was given at the beginning of the month, and the after survey was given at the end of the month during the celebration.

Other Data Points

State Scores. This study is largely concentrating on student interests and involvement in independent reading; however, it is still important to look for connections between their attitudes and their state scores. As described extensively above, a students' involvement in reading independently is often proven to positively influence or negatively influence if that student does not participate in reading, a students' achievement academically. While evaluating my research, I looked at the students' MCA scores to see if I could see a pattern. These scores were collected by the school.

Word Count. During the competition, I also kept track of book word count. The reason I recorded word count is to eliminate any bias I may have had about a book's reading level or difficulty. It allows the researcher to look at how many words the student has read without needing to concentrate on overall difficulty of the vocabulary or concepts presented in the book. Word count takes out a lot of the variables while analyzing reading. Students will be provided a word count found through a Google search when they write the title of their book on the poster in front of the room. Again, like state scores, I was curious if I would notice a pattern within my student sample.

Findings: Analysis of the Surveys

Before. The before student survey was designed to gauge what genres and amount of reading students have already been exposed to, their involvement with reading both inside and outside of school, and their perspective of themselves as a reader. See Appendix for full survey.

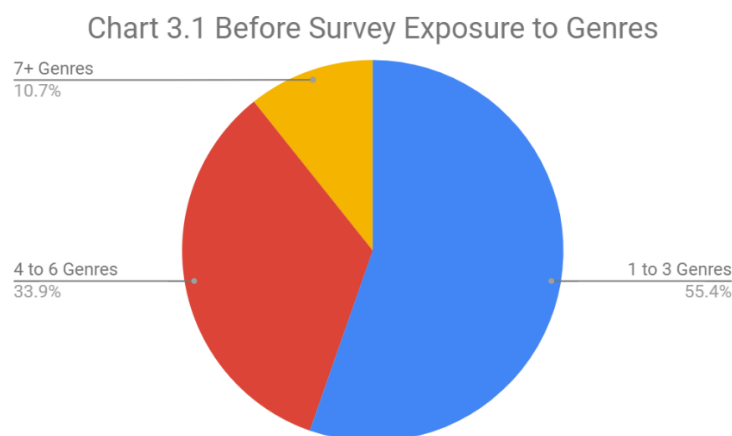
Exposure. Questions 2, 4, and 5 were written to analyze students' exposure to literature. Question 2: "What types of books do you like to read," has students reflect on what genre they

find the most interesting. Question 4: “How do you find new books you want to read,” helps me understand what methods of exposure they are used to and like doing. Lastly, Question 5: “How often do you read at home and what do you read at home,” helps me gauge if the student is a pleasure reader, someone who reads in their personal time, or just reads at school.

For the genres, Question 2, I concentrated more on analyzing how many genres each student picked. Though it is important to know which genre students enjoy reading. I wanted to know how many genres students like to read. 31/56 students, 55.4%, selected one to three different types of genres; 19/56 students, 33.9%, selected four to six different genres; and 6/56 students, 10.7%, selected seven or more genres (Figure 1). This tells me most of my students prefer to stick to the same genre and are hesitant to explore something new.

Figure 1

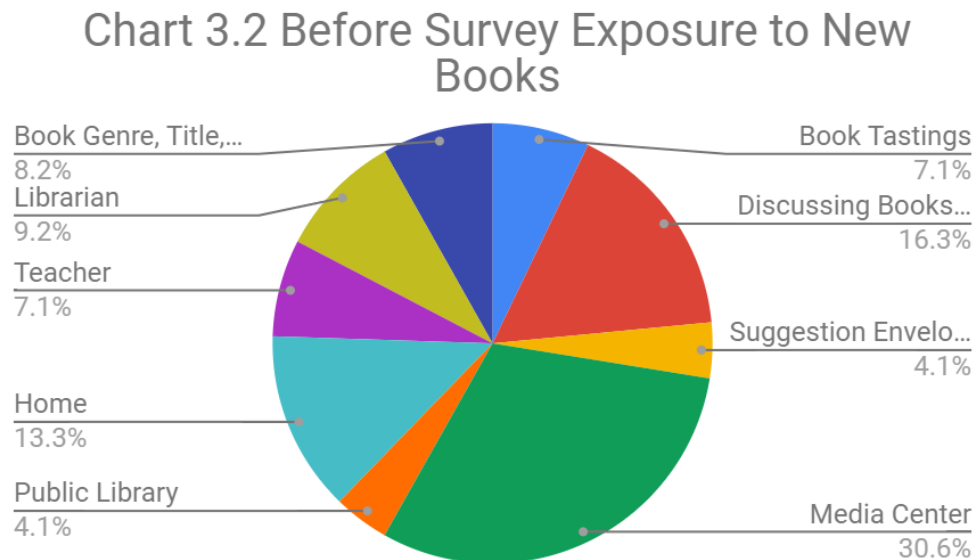
Before Survey Exposure to Genre



Students seemed to agree upon their method at finding a book to read, Question 4, with 30/56 students, 53.6%, finding books through the media center; 16/56 students, 28.6%, discovering new books through discussion with friends and peers; and 13/56 students, 23.2 %, finding a book at home. The other categories were low on students' preferred method of finding new books (Figure 2). Since students enjoy going to the media center, and my school has recently remodeled and revamped their media center, it makes sense that over 50% of students prefer this method of exposure.

Figure 2

Before Survey Exposure to New Books



Students' amount of reading at home ranged from none all the way to multiple hours, Question 5. A large portion of students wrote general comments such as "I don't read much at

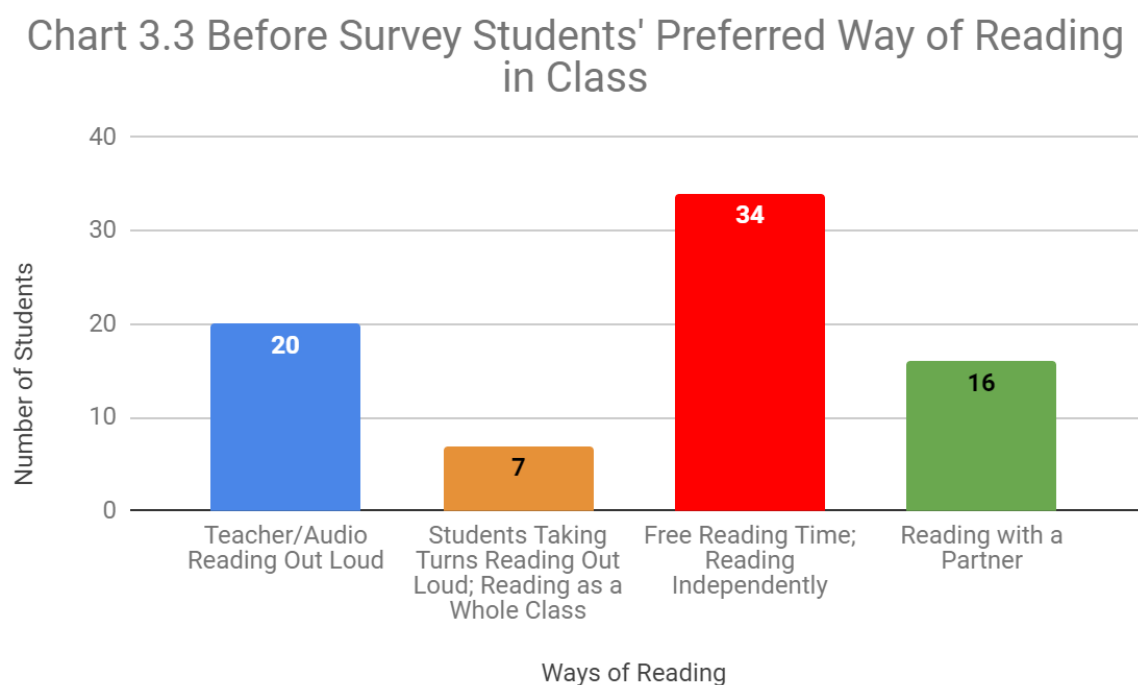
home but would like to,” “I read 15 minutes before bed every night,” and “There is no time for me to read at home.” Since some students provided a time, and other did not, it is hard to gauge how much students are truly reading at home.

Involvement. Questions 3 and 6 were designed to gather information about students’ involvement in reading. Question 3 “What ways of reading do you enjoy most in class,” was designed to capture students’ preferred method of reading in class. Since I requested that they check all the methods on how they like to read, I was able to get a feel on the popularity of one method over another. Question 6 concentrated on what encouraged students to read in class, “What encourages you to read in this class.” This question helps me understand students’ motivation to read during school hours.

Independent reading took a huge lead through analyzing Question 3’s results; 34 students preferred to read independently. Twenty liked listening to me read or the textbook audio, 16 liked reading with a partner, and seven liked when students took turns reading aloud and reading as a class (Figure 3). Initially, I am surprised by how many students stated they preferred reading independently. I thought reading with a partner would be preferred by more students.

Figure 3

Before Survey Students' Preferred Way of Reading in Class



Students open ended response to Question 6, varied from contests to the risk of being scolded by the teacher. See Table 1 to see more detailed responses.

Table 1

Before Survey What Encourages Students to Read in Class

"teacher and the books I read"
"Books are interesting to me."
"I like escaping the real world and going into a different world."
"contests and prizes"
"contests"
"just the sound of silent reading"
"Satisfaction of reading and finishing a book"
"It is something to do when I'm done with a task."
"I like getting to the suspense of a book."
"makes stories in my head"
"my teacher"
"my friend"
"boredom"
"listening to others talk about books"

Perspective. Lastly of all, Questions 1, 7, and 8 were written to help analyze students' perspectives of themselves as readers before the implementation of the action research. Question 1 asks, "Do you enjoy reading? If you circled sort of, please explain why." In order to see if a student's perspective is influenced by exposure activities and different involvement methods, I need to know what they already think about reading. Question 7, "Estimate how many books have you read this year," and Question 8, "What was your favorite book you've read," are designed to have students reflect on their reading so far this year.

For Question 1, students had three answer options to choose from in order to tell me if they enjoy reading: yes, no, and sort of. Twenty-five of 56 students, 44.6%, marked yes they enjoy reading; 11/56 students, 19.6%, marked no they do not enjoy reading; and 20/56 students, 35.7%, stated that they sort of enjoyed reading (Figure 4). For students who marked sort of, I

asked a follow-up question asking them to explain why they marked sort of for their answer. See Table 2 for a few of students' responses.

Figure 4

Before Survey Do Students Enjoy Reading

Chart 3.5 Before Survey Do Students Enjoy Reading

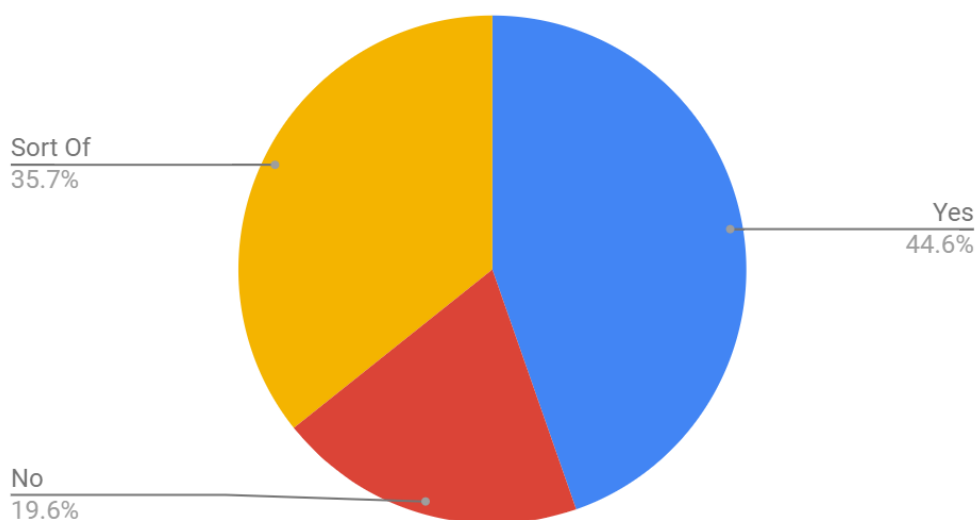


Table 2

Before Survey Students' Explanations to Why They Sort of Enjoy Reading

"Because it depends on what I read. I like to read about people with sports."
"I like physical activities better, so I'd rather be moving around."
"because I don't like alot of books"
"If I find a good book that I like then I will read otherwise I just don't feel like I don't want to put the book down like when someone chooses my books"
"I like to read sometimes when I'm board or have nothing to do."
"It depends on the type of book."
"It can be fun if I have a book thats really interesting."
"Some days I like reading and other days I don't"
"I like reading but it depends on the book. If I like it I will love to read it."
"I like it sort of because sometimes I don't get a book that is very good so then I don't really like to read it."
"I don't enjoy reading somtimes because if it's a good book I'll read but if not I won't read."
"Some days I like to read, and somedays I don't."
"I just don't like reading."
"I don't like to read but I read when I find an interesting book."
"Because I only read in school not at home"
"If I get in to a book I like it I hate reading what i dont like"
"because im not very good at it"
"because it dipens on the book"
"I have to have a good book."
"because you can do it when your bored"
"It is fun and makes storys in my head."
"I am only into certain books, and I don't feel like I have time to read."
"Well I got that good ____ so I just try to read but is just not just fun."
<i>*responses above were directly quoted from students' surveys.</i>

Students were asked to estimate how many books they have read this year and what their favorite book was in Questions 7 and 6. From 56 students, 552 books were read before starting the action research in April. This means each student read 9.9 books. Students provided a variety of book titles to answer what their favorite books were. There was an immense range of

responses. Some students stated they only read one, or even none, while other students stated they read 10-plus books.

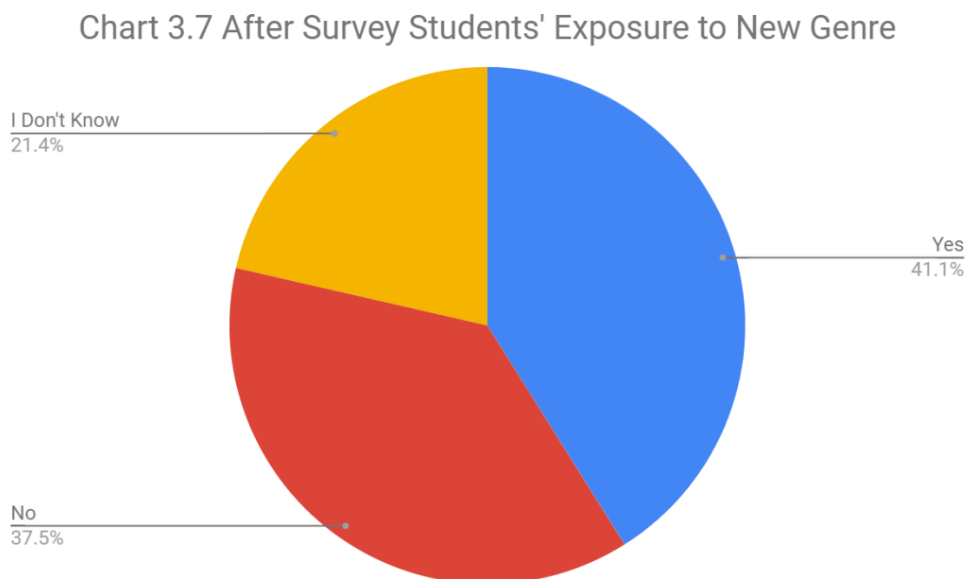
After. The after survey was conducted to see how students' responses may have changed after the activities they were introduced to during April. Similar to the before survey, questions were created to provide data related to students' exposure to literature, how they are involved with reading inside and outside of school, and their perspective of reading.

Exposure. Questions 2, 4, and 5 gave insight about students' exposure to literature. Question 2 asked students if they experienced any new genres during the month of April. This question was designed to show me if students were exposed to different writing than they were used to. Question 4 asked students if they were able to find a book in a new way during the month of April. By collecting data about students' methods of finding new books, it allows me to see if they experienced a new method of exposure. Lastly, Question 5 asked students if they were encouraged to read more at home. It is important to know how much reading is done academically and recreationally, and if integrating these activities in class had any effect on their personal reading at home.

It was interesting analyzing the data provided by Question 2. Students received the options of yes, no, and I don't know. Then they were instructed to mark any new genre they tried. Including the option of I don't know allowed students to honestly express if they were unsure if they read a new genre. Twenty-three of 56 of students, 41.1%, selected yes, they tried a new genre; 21/56 of students, 37.5%, selected no, they did not try a new genre; and 12/56, 21.4%, selected I don't know (Figure 5).

Figure 5

After Survey Students' Exposure to New Genre



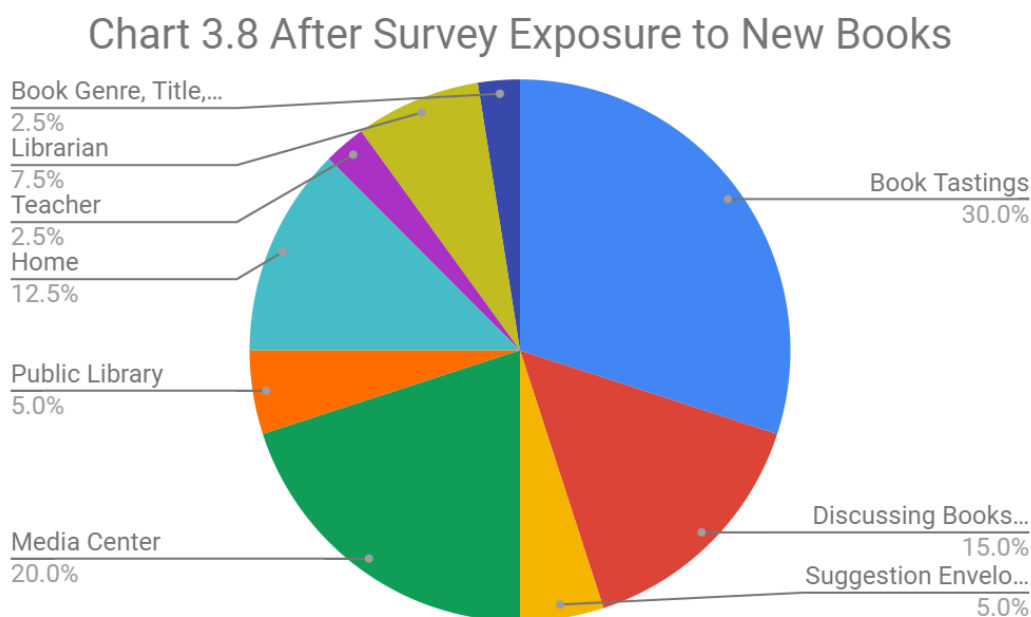
In addition, if students chose the option of yes, they were instructed to check the genre that he/she tried. Twenty-three of 56 students total, 41.1%, selected yes, they tried a new genre; these 23 students tried 56 new genres. This means each student who selected yes tried 2.4 new genres. The data show students who were willing to try a new genre, attempted to try multiple genres. Students who selected the I don't know option, could have still experienced a new genre but did not realize it.

Question 4 asked students if they found a book in a new way this month. Similar to the previously discussed question, students were able to select yes or no. If they chose yes, they were instructed to mark the new way they found a book. 28/56 of students, 50%, selected yes and 28/56 of students, 50%, selected no. The 50% of students who selected yes marked many ways

they were exposed to a new book (Figure 6). Half the class found a book in a new way during the month-long study.

Figure 6

After Survey Exposure to New Books



Lastly, Question 5 asked students if they were encouraged to read at home during the month of April. Again, they could select yes, no, or I read the same amount. Then they were asked to explain their answer. Thirteen of 56 of students, 23.2%, selected yes; 20/56 of students, 35.7%, selected no; and 23/56 of students, 41.1%, selected the same amount. Students then provided their reasoning as to why they selected yes, no, or the same amount. Their reasoning is illustrated in Table 3. Overall, the data collected of students who read the same amount and of

students who started reading at home could be combined to show 36/56 of the students, 64.2%, read some at home.

Table 3

After Survey Students' Explanation Why They Increased Reading at Home

Yes	No	I read the same amount
"challenge myself"	"No because I am too busy at home."	"I already read a decent amount."
"I actually read a book."	"I just felt the same [didn't like reading books]."	"I read when I want at home"
"At first I never read at home now I bring a book home every night."	"not sure"	"I read at night."
"Yes, because everything is starting to make sense and I am more into them."	"I dislike reading."	"I don't read a ton at home."
"I read a lot of books."	"I always have a busy schedule, so I don't have much time to read."	"I read 30 minutes before bed."
"I read to my little sister."	"I just haven't had time."	"read same amount"
"We get a prize in class for reading."	"I never bring my book home."	"I mostly like reading at school."
<i>*responses above were directly quoted from students' surveys.</i>		

Involvement. Question 3 asked students' which ways of reading they enjoyed most in class over the month of April. It was designed to see if students changed their opinions on their preferred method of reading during class time. They could select all that apply, so students were able to select more than one way of reading (Figure 7). Twelve students checked teacher/audio reading out loud, four students selected students taking turns reading out loud or reading as a whole class, 32 selected free reading time or reading independently, and 16 selected reading with a partner. Similar to what the before survey showed, these students enjoyed reading independently more than the other options provided in class. Interestingly, students taking turns

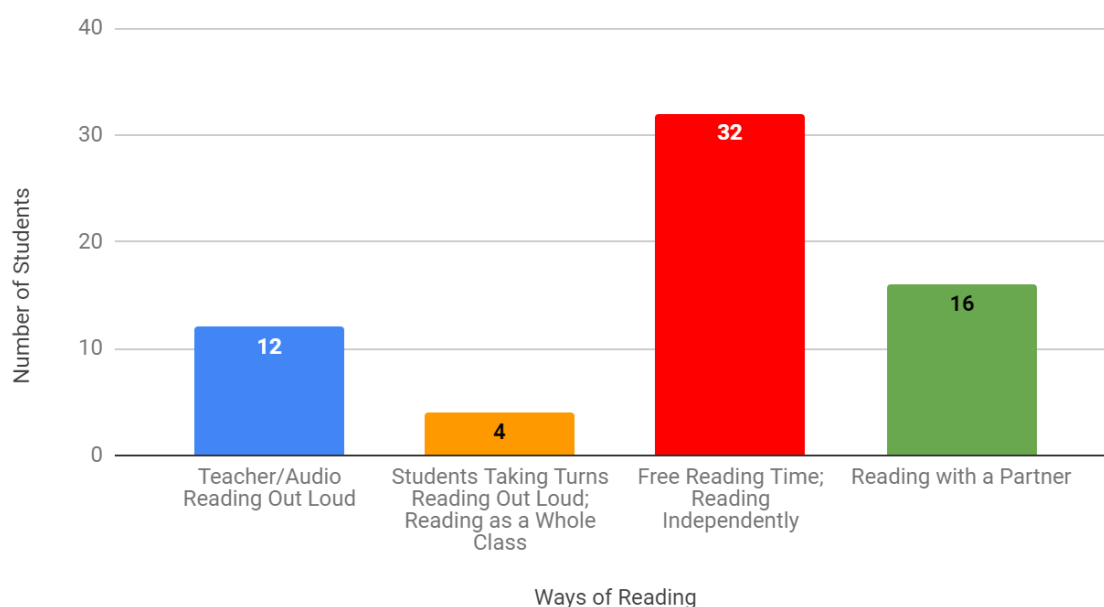
reading out loud or reading as a class went from seven students down to only four students.

Perhaps this change shows students started to prefer reading independently or quieter ways of reading.

Figure 7

After Survey Students' Preferred Way of Reading in Class

Chart 3.10 After Survey Students' Preferred Way of Reading in Class



Question 6 open ended response allowed students to explain what encouraged them to read in class during the month of April (Table 4). Some reasons were similar to what students responded on the before survey; however, I noticed more specific explanations provided by students on the after survey. Students were more inclined to mention specific methods we

utilized during the month in their reasoning such as reading every day, being able to say they read a book in 1 month, and the class competition/goal.

Table 4

After Survey What Encourages Students to Read in Class

"I had two."
"the genre"
"teacher told me to"
"reading everyday and just focusing on the books"
"my book"
"being able to say I read a book in a month because I am a slow reader"
"The how many books the class goal was."
"I found a good book."
"my lack of reading in the past"
"getting smarter"
"just to be calmed and focused for some time"
"tests"
"class"
"I had a good book."
<i>*responses above were directly quoted from students' surveys.</i>

Perspective. Finally, Questions 1, 7, and 8 were written to have students reflect on any changes in perspectives they may have in response to reading. Question 1 asked if the student's feeling has changed about reading during April. This is important information because it informs me if they feel the same toward reading or changed entirely. Question 7 asked students to estimate how many books they read during the month of April, and Question 8 asked students' what book they read or are reading. These two questions help me understand if students increased their amount of reading.

Question 1 allowed students to answer yes, no, or sort of. It then requested an explanation of why they chose what they did. Sixteen students selected yes, their feelings about

reading changed; 26 selected no, their feelings about reading did not change; and 14 selected sort of (Figure 8). Students were then asked to explain why they chose that response (Table 5).

From their open response, I noticed many students who selected sort of provided a positive reason why their opinion changed. Because of this, I feel comfortable with combining the data of students who stated yes, their opinion toward reading changed and students who stated sort of. This tells me 30/56 students, 53.6%, of students started having positive feelings toward independent reading. In addition, some comments made by students who selected no still explained they enjoyed reading. These students seemed to have selected no because they already enjoyed reading before the study was conducted, and they still enjoyed reading when the study was finished.

Figure 8

After Survey How Students' Feelings about Reading Changed

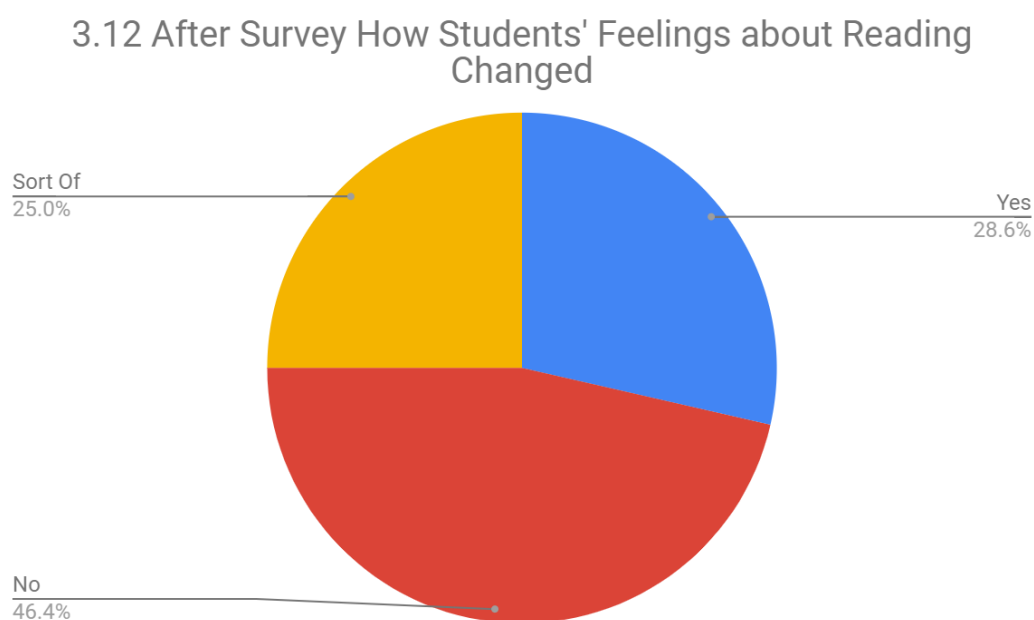


Table 5

After Survey Students' Explanations to Why Their Feelings about Reading Changed

Yes	No	Sort Of
"I don't know"	"I already loved reading."	"I feel more comfortable reading bigger books."
"I really like my book <i>Wonder</i> ."	"I read the same amount every month."	"I feel more happy to read."
"I have been more interested because we have been reading more."	"I've always loved reading."	"I am in love with reading."
"It is interesting when you start a new book."	"I still like to read."	"Because I don't mind reading as much."
"I like reading now."	"I read the same book."	"Because I found a series and I like it."
"I really like my book I am reading."	"It was just more reading."	"I tried new books."
"I found new books to read."	"didn't read different stuff"	"Yes I tried new types of books."
"found better books."	"becus no uthier thing ckanged [because nothing else changed]"	"Because I tried new genres."
	"I don't like reading."	"I was sort of forced to read more and I got more into it."
	"It is still boring."	"I don't like some of the books and its kinda boring."
<i>*responses above were directly quoted from students' surveys.</i>		

For Questions 7 and 8, students were asked to estimate how many books they read over the month of April and to name a book they read or did read. Fifty-six students estimated that they read a total of 137 books over the month of April. This equivalent to 2.4 books being read by each student over the 1-month span. Students read more books over the month than they did throughout the school year leading up to the study.

Other Data Points

State Scores. Though it is difficult to prove a connection between the study conducted and student's MCA scores from spring of their fifth-grade year to the spring of their sixth-grade year, I believe it is still important to analyze this assessment results. Many studies, as discussed in Chapter 2, mentioned the correlation between strong test scores and reading preference: the higher the state score, the more likely it is that the student enjoys reading independently. Therefore, it is beneficial to look through students' MCA scores and see if a pattern arises.

Fifth-grade spring scores showed 30/56 of students, 53.6%, were below, partially meeting, or receiving no score on the MCA. By the spring of their sixth-grade year, 22/56 of students, 39.3%, meet or exceeded MCA state standards. Table 6 and Table 7 show students' MCA scores from their fifth-grade year to their sixth-grade year along with the difference between the scores.

An increase in MCA scores could relate to the increase emphasis of independent reading within my classroom; however, this is subjective since the MCA concentrates on students' understanding of state standards which are also taught within the English curriculum. Therefore, I cannot positively say this study, positively or solely, increased students' MCA scores. However, I cannot prove the opposite either. I cannot state independent reading had a negative or positive influence on students' performance on the MCA.

Table 6*Class One MCA Scores*

Table 3.14 Class One MCA Scores			
	5th Grade MCA	6th Grade MCA	MCA Growth
Student 1	542	618	-24
Student 2	559	660	1
Student 3	558	670	12
Student 4	557	665	8
Student 5	541	638	-3
Student 6	548	633	-15
Student 7	549	655	6
Student 8	547	647	0
Student 9		665	
Student 10	563	677	14
Student 11	549	649	0
Student 12	548	639	-9
Student 13	552	643	-9
Student 14	560	653	-7
Student 15	546	654	8
Student 16	560	660	0
Student 17		670	
Student 18	550	646	-4
Student 19	564	660	6
Student 20	556	653	-3
Student 21		654	
Student 22	543	640	-3
Student 23	562	664	2
Student 24	562	664	2
Student 25	553	658	5
Student 26		662	
Student 27	559	650	-9
Student 28		656	

Table 7*Class Two MCA Scores*

Table 3.15 Class Two MCA Scores			
	5th Grade MCA	6th Grade MCA	MCA Growth
Student 1	538	638	0
Student 2	565	674	9
Student 3	556	654	-2
Student 4	540	647	7
Student 5	561	659	-2
Student 6	555	668	13
Student 7	550	648	-2
Student 8	556	662	6
Student 9	546	652	6
Student 10	557	655	-2
Student 11	546	653	7
Student 12	566	666	0
Student 13	540	639	-1
Student 14	546	653	7
Student 15	557	662	5
Student 16	547	654	7
Student 17	551	659	8
Student 18	526	624	-2
Student 19	534	633	-1
Student 20	546	656	10
Student 21	561	680	19
Student 22	542	646	4
Student 23	544	643	-1
Student 24	555	661	6
Student 25	546	640	-6
Student 26	529	631	2
Student 27	548	649	1
Student 28	533	631	-2

Word Count. By keeping track of books' word count, I was able to avoid having bias toward what my students were reading in class. It also had the benefit of students being more driven for the largest number of words in their book they completed, and students reading books below their reading level, felt comfortable telling me what book they read because word count gives such a high number. Table 8 lists the books students told me about and the book's corresponding word count according to wordcounters.com or through a quick Google search for the book's word count. Students wrote the title of the book and the author on a chart hanging on the wall. They brought their book to me so I could accurately look up the word count. The word count was then written on a post-it and the student transferred it onto the chart. Lastly, they wrote their own name next to the book they read. Because of this, I transferred the information into the table to protect students' identities. Unfortunately, some books did not have a word count provided. These cells were left blank on the table below.

Overall, students told me about 68 books they read which equaled 3,713,530 words. This is not including word counts of books could not be identified. If the total word count is taken and divided by 56, the number of students participating in the study, then each student read 66,313 words in the month of April. It needs to be pointed out that some students read multiple books, and there were also students who did not tell me about the books they read. Though these two variables exist, the impressive word count is positive data supporting this study and its effectiveness.

Table 8*Students' Books and Word Counts*

Book Title	Author	Word Count
<i>In a Glass Grimmly</i>	Adam Gidwitz	55100
<i>Projekt 1065: A Novel of World War II</i>	Alan Gratz	65637
<i>Mascot</i>	AntonyJohn	54968
<i>The Righteous Revenge X</i>	Artemis Bonner	
<i>Chronicles of Narnia: Book 1</i>	C.S. Lewis	42714
<i>Chronicles of Narnia: Book 2</i>	C.S. Lewis	45565
<i>Time Stoppers</i>	Carrie Jones	81282
<i>The Land of Stories: The Wishing Spell</i>	Chris Colfer	98248
<i>Vietnam: I Pledge Allegiance</i>	Chris Lynch	61766
<i>The Nest</i>	Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney	97861
<i>Morpheus Road: The Light</i>	D. J. MacHale	93235
<i>The Genius Files 1</i>	Dan Gutman	58944
<i>The Genius Files 2</i>	Dan Gutman	57206
<i>The Genius Files 3</i>	Dan Gutman	56520
<i>The One Million Dollar Shot</i>	Dan Gutman	54238
<i>Skulduggery Pleasant Mortal Coil</i>	Derek Landy	103506
<i>Roar</i>	Emma Clayton	103641
<i>Roar</i>	Emma Clayton	103641
<i>Warriors: Warrior's Return</i>	Erin Hunter	65105
<i>January 365</i>	Gabrielle Lord	48000
<i>Ghetto Cowboy</i>	Gregory Neri	35915
<i>Framed A T.O.A.S.T Mystery</i>	James Ponti	80000
<i>The Georges and the Jewels</i>	Jane Smiley	
<i>Frightful's Mountain</i>	Jean Craighead George	53484
<i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown</i>	Jeff Kinney	20449
<i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Meltdown</i>	Jeff Kinney	20449
<i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Get Away</i>	Jeff Kinney	15876

Table 8 (continued)

Book Title	Author	Word Count
<i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules</i>	Jeff Kinney	21904
<i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules</i>	Jeff Kinney	21904
<i>The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary: How Greg Heffley Went to Hollywood</i>	Jeff Kinney	52000
<i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Getaway</i>	Jeff Kinney	12100
<i>A Night Divided</i>	Jennifer A. Nielsen	67061
<i>P.S. I Still Love You</i>	Jenny Han	79580
<i>Never Quit: How I became a Special Ops Pararescue Jumper</i>	Jimmy Settle	73173
<i>See You at Harry's</i>	Jo Knowles	56011
<i>Code Talker: A Novel about the Navajo Marines of World War Two</i>	Joseph Bruchac	57284
<i>The Last Apprentice</i>	Joseph Delaney	52098
<i>Wishtree</i>	K. A. Applegate	23409
<i>Out of the Dust</i>	Karen Hesse	16641
<i>The Tale of Despereaux</i>	Kate DiCamillo	39640
<i>Silver Wing</i>	Kenneth Oppel	68878
<i>The War that Saved My Life</i>	Kimberly Brubaker Bradley	66410
<i>Freakling</i>	Lana Krumwiede	62152
<i>Torment</i>	Lauren Kate	87454
<i>Holes</i>	Louis Sachar	46656
<i>Fuzzy Mud</i>	Louis Sachar	43536
<i>Holes</i>	Louis Sachar	46656
<i>Holes</i>	Louis Sachar	46656
<i>Runt</i>	Marion Dane Bauer	36000
<i>Invasion of the Overworld</i>	Mark Cheverton	44153
<i>White Star: A Dog on the Titanic</i>	Marty Crisp	26244
<i>The Odd Squad</i>	Michael Fry	26649
<i>The Cardboard Kingdom</i>	Multiple Authors	72000

Table 8 (continued)

<i>Book Title</i>	Author	Word Count
<i>Everything, Everything</i>	Nicola Yoon	58580
<i>Potterwookiee: The Monster in my Closet</i>	Obert Sky	82960
<i>13 Days to Midnight</i>	Patrick Carman	67710
<i>Auggie & Me: Three Wonder Stories</i>	R. J. Palacio	73564
<i>Dork Diary 12: Tales from a Not-So-Secret Crush Catastrophe</i>	Rachel Renee Russell	38341
<i>Finding Zasha</i>	Randi G. Barrow	35960
<i>Magnus Chase</i>	Rick Riordan	120147
<i>Above</i>	Roland Smith	
<i>The Edge</i>	Roland Smith	59885
<i>Spy School British Invasion</i>	Stuart Gibbs	66413
<i>The Fashion Committee</i>	Susan Juby	
<i>The Eighth Day</i>	Thornton Wilder	133906
<i>The Adventure Zone: Here There be Gerblins</i>	Travis McElroy & Others	64000
<i>Wings of Fire: Talons of Power</i>	Tui T. Sutherland	68440
<i>Monster</i>	Walter Dean Myers	24025
	Total Word Count:	3713530

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the homogeneous sample size. As mentioned earlier, the study took place at a primarily White middle school with less than 15% of student population from other ethnicities. In addition, 67.3% of the student population meets or exceeds reading standards measured by the MCA (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

Second, the amount of time used to collect data was a limitation. During research, studies stressed the importance of having studies extend past an academic year (National Reading Panel, 2000; Reis et al., 2008). Students have been introduced to independently

reading, and encouraged to do so, since the early years of their education. However, the guidelines I followed in my classroom took place in a month span. In addition, I could not control what students have already been exposed to previously in their educational experience.

Lastly, some questions on the before and after surveys were subjective and relied on student honesty and memory. Examples of this are the two questions requesting students to remember how many books they read throughout the year (before survey) and during the month (after survey). Because of this, it is important to keep in mind that students make mistakes while analyzing the data provided above. In addition, word count might be off or inaccurate. Multiple websites were used in order to identify books' word counts. Since multiple websites were used, word count can be subjective. For example, some websites might include the title page while others do not.

Implications

My Own Classroom. Here I further analyze the data provided above by concentrating on specific elements from the data collected in order to reflect on my three research questions and their implications within my own classroom. Also, I provide steps moving forward in relation to what I found.

What activities work best to expose my students to a variety of books and fosters their interests in independent reading? Question 2 on both the before and after survey related to how many genres students read. The main information I noticed is that half of the student sample (55.4%) were only reading one to three genres according to the before survey. After implementing my action research, 41% of students stated they tried a new genre within the month. This tells me that my activities to expose students to different types of writing was a

success. Students were able to explore different types of books without feeling the obligation of finishing the whole book. I am uncertain if they liked the new genres they tried; however, they were exposed to books they were not used to reading.

Question 4 on both surveys asked students how they preferred to find a new book. The after survey showed a 50% split in the student sample of being able to find a book in a new way. This was incredibly interesting to have the data split down the middle. Though the data does not lean negatively or positively, I believe it is still important to have my students explore different ways to find novels. Therefore, I will continue providing methods for them to do so.

However, when I look more closely at the data gathered for Question 4, I see some methods of exposure I want to continue in the future and some I do not. I noticed that the media center was strong in both before and after. Thirty-point six percent of students preferred the media center in the before survey and 20% did in the after survey. In addition, book tastings went from 7.1% before to 30% after. This tells me students enjoy going to the media center to find new books. I am also lumping two data points together, after media center data and after book tasting data, because students did the book tastings in the media center, so I can see them using these two methods interchangeably. One method I plan to discontinue in the future is the suggestion envelope. This activity started at 4.1% according to the before survey and only went up to 5%. Students did not seem to enjoy this method of exposure and the amount of time spent on this method is not being validated by students' interests.

Lastly, Question 5 asked about reading at home. I was proud to see that more students started reading at home between the before and after survey. Twenty-three-point two percent started reading at home according to the after survey. They stated reasons that varied from

challenging themselves to being able to gain a prize in class. Even students who stated they read the same amount, still had positive responses as to why they responded with that answer.

In conclusion, I believe the methods I chose to expose my students to a variety of books and foster their interests in reading was a success. Data show an increase in most methods and these will be continued in future years of teaching. However, methods such as the suggestion envelope will be discontinued because the gain of student exposure does not justify the time spent on the method during class.

What methods can I implement in my classroom to encourage students' interest and involvement in independent reading? Question 3 on both surveys asked students about how they liked to read in class. The data remained consistent between the two surveys besides the teacher or audio reading out loud. This went from 20 students preferring this way of reading down to 12 students. I plan to start the year with more teacher or audio read activities and then start to have students move to reading more independently by the end of the year. I was also surprised in the lack of students who liked reading with friends. I thought this would be higher because students enjoy socializing with each other. However, many students stated working with a partner caused them to slow down or get easily distracted.

Question 6 asked students what encouraged them to read in the classroom. Again, their reasoning varied from competition, finding a good book, and being provided time. With the varied responses, I know students were truly reflecting on why they read in class.

Overall, the data showed involvement in independent reading was a success and encouraged students' interests and involvement. Though Question 3 showed little variation,

Question 6's open responses became more diverse and thoughtful on the after survey. This causes me to believe students were able to explore different ways to be involved during reading.

Can I change student perspectives of themselves as a reader and independent reading through activities that vary in both exposure to literature and involvement? Question 1 on both surveys required students to explain if they liked, disliked, or were indifferent toward independent reading. The before survey showed 44.6% enjoyed reading, 35.7% sort of liked reading, and 19.6% did not like reading. The after survey showed that 28.6% had a change in feeling toward independent reading, 46.4% thought the same, and 25% sort of felt differently. Initially this did not tell me much about how they felt; however, with looking through their comments about why they felt this way, I noticed that there were positive comments and reflections for each answer. Yes, there were still negative ones such as comments relating the reading is still boring, but there were also comments stating that they are reading the same amount, they like the book they are reading, and a student even feels more comfortable reading longer books. Though comments were both negative and positive, students were able to reflect on their interaction with reading through this study.

Questions 7 and 8 had students estimate how many books they read and tell me one book they were reading or already read. The before survey showed that the 56 students read 552 books (about 9.9 books each) over the span of 7 months (September to March). Broken down further, this is about 1.41 book per student per month. The after survey showed 56 students read 137 books (about 2.4 books) over the one-month span of the study. Data show that students increased their reading through this experience. This data provides encouragement that using a variety of methods to expose students to books coupled with methods designed to encourage

student interaction with reading is overall beneficial. Since many studies show positive correlation between reading and student achievement, discussed in Chapter 2, it can only be beneficial for students to be reading more novels both in and outside of school.

Future Studies Recommendations

My recommendations for future studies concentrate mainly on the surveys. If, and when, I redo the study, I plan to make the before and after surveys more similar in wording. This will allow me to easily analyze the data and compare the data more closely between the two surveys. In addition, I would change the wording of some of the questions. For example, for Question 5 on the before survey, “How often do you read at home? What do you read at home?” I would request students provide an estimation of the amount of time they read at home. In addition, on the before survey, I would ask students to circle yes or no to answer if they read at home.

Lastly is a suggestion for someone trying to implement the study in his/her own classroom. It is important to keep your own class in mind. Activities geared toward exposure, involvement, and perspective should fit your unique class’ make-up and personality. For example, you may have a class that cannot handle long periods of time reading. Therefore, when you are trying to encourage independent reading during class, it would be more beneficial to provide a shorter time frame for them to read. All in all, it is important to manipulate the study to fit your own teaching style and class composition.

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APPENDIX

FIGURE ONE

Name: _____ ORF Score (teacher): _____

Reading Attitude Survey

1. Do you enjoy reading? Yes No Sort Of

If you circled sort of, please explain why.

2. What types of books do you like to read?

<input type="checkbox"/> Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/> Adventure & Survival	<input type="checkbox"/> Mysteries	<input type="checkbox"/> Horror (Scary) & Suspense
<input type="checkbox"/> Humor & Joke	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Novels	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input type="checkbox"/> Books about people your age (Realistic)	<input type="checkbox"/> Chick-Lit (Drama)	<input type="checkbox"/> Science Fiction & Fantasy	<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry
<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Nonfiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Nonfiction
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____			

3. What ways of reading do you enjoy most in class (independent and as a class)? Check all the apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher/audio reading out loud	<input type="checkbox"/> Students taking turns reading out loud; reading as a whole class	<input type="checkbox"/> Free reading time; reading independently
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading with a partner	Explain why you checked what you did: _____ _____ _____ _____	

4. How do you find new books you want to read? Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Book Tastings	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussing Books with Peers/Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Suggestion Envelope (talking about books as a class)
<input type="checkbox"/> From the Media Center	<input type="checkbox"/> From the Public Library	<input type="checkbox"/> Home
<input type="checkbox"/> Your Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> The Librarian	<input type="checkbox"/> Using book genre, title, author, etc. Please add detail: _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		

5. How often do you read at home? What do you read at home? _____

6. What encourages you to read in this class? _____

7. Estimate how many books have you read this year? _____

8. What was your favorite book you've read? _____

FIGURE TWO

Name: _____

Reading Attitude Survey After

1. After "I love to read" month, has your feelings changed about reading?

Yes

No

Sort Of

Please explain why/how.

2. Did you try any new genres (types of books)?

Yes

No

I don't know

If yes, check the genre that you tried.

<input type="checkbox"/> Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/> Adventure & Survival	<input type="checkbox"/> Mysteries	<input type="checkbox"/> Horror (Scary) & Suspense
<input type="checkbox"/> Humor & Joke	<input type="checkbox"/> Animals	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Novels	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input type="checkbox"/> Books about people your age (Realistic)	<input type="checkbox"/> Chick-Lit (Drama)	<input type="checkbox"/> Science Fiction & Fantasy	<input type="checkbox"/> Poetry
<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Fiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Nonfiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Nonfiction
<input type="checkbox"/> Other/Name of book: _____			

3. What ways of reading do you enjoy most in class this month (independent and as a class)? Check all the apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher/audio reading out loud	<input type="checkbox"/> Students taking turns reading out loud; reading as a whole class	<input type="checkbox"/> Free reading time; reading independently
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading with a partner	Explain why you checked what you did: _____ _____ _____ _____	

4. Did you find a book in a new way this month? Yes No

If yes, check the new way you found a book.

<input type="checkbox"/> Book Tastings	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussing Books with Peers/Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Suggestion Envelope (talking about books as a class)
<input type="checkbox"/> From the Media Center	<input type="checkbox"/> From the Public Library	<input type="checkbox"/> Home
<input type="checkbox"/> Your Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> The Librarian	<input type="checkbox"/> Using book genre, title, author, etc. Please add detail: _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		